

Same-sex couples do not influence their adoptive children's gender identity

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There is no major difference in the gender identity development of children raised by same-sex parents compared to those adopted by heterosexual couples. These are the findings of a new study in Springer's journal *Sex Roles*. Lead author Rachel Farr of the University of Kentucky in the US says that the toys that children prefer to play with in their preschool years are much more tell-tale about whether they will grow up to conform to typical gender norms or not.

The study included 106 families headed by lesbian, gay or heterosexual [parents](#). Farr and her team examine how gender-typical behavior develops over time within different family structures, and whether it remains relatively consistent as children grow older. The researchers observed the play styles and the toys that the families' preschool children preferred during playtime. The parents also completed relevant questionnaires. Farr's team returned five years later to interview the children.

The types of play and behavior that most children displayed were found to be typical of their gender, and already appeared to be set in motion from early childhood onwards. The few [preschool children](#) who played more with toys that are not typically assigned to their sex were in their later school years more likely to aspire to jobs and to prefer activities that are not typically ascribed to their gender.

The data show that family structure had little influence on how children's sense of gender would develop. Moreover, little truth was found in the

idea that lesbian or gay parents might encourage or allow more gender nonconformity among their children.

"Parental sexual orientation and family type did not affect children's gender conformity or nonconformity in any significant way," emphasizes Farr. "Our results suggest that the gender development of children adopted by both lesbian and gay parents proceeds in typical ways, and is similar to that of children adopted by [heterosexual couples](#). It therefore appears that having both a male and female role model in the home is not necessary for facilitating typical gender development among adopted children, nor does it discourage [gender](#) nonconformity."

Farr believes that the findings may help attorneys, judges, social workers, and adoption agencies when they consider issues about how the sexual orientation of parents may influence the development of their [children's gender roles](#).

More information: Rachel H. Farr et al, Children's Gender-Typed Behavior from Early to Middle Childhood in Adoptive Families with Lesbian, Gay, and Heterosexual Parents, *Sex Roles* (2017). [DOI: 10.1007/s11199-017-0812-5](#)

Provided by Springer

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